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SUBJECT: IRAQ ELECTION: IRAQI PARTIES CAMPAIGN FOR VOTES IN JORDAN

REF: A. AMMAN 3963

[1](#)B. AMMAN 7709

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DAVID HALE, REASONS: 1.4 (B &D)

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) While 23,000 Iraqis in Jordan voted in the January 2005 elections, Iraqi turnout in Jordan for next week's elections should be significantly higher due to a more proactive campaign effort in Jordan by several Iraqi political parties, greater Sunni Arab participation, efforts by the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq to explain the electoral process, and better information on candidates. Iraqi political party activity here includes widespread placement of posters, newspaper advertisements, SMS messages on mobile phones, free food, and (allegedly), some cash payments. The Allawi, Dulaime, and Mutlak coalitions appear to be making the greatest effort. In contrast, al-Hakim, s UIC is showing no public presence at all, though it may be well organized behind the scenes. End Summary.

Iraqi Voters in Jordan

[1](#)2. (SBU) Background: Jordan is currently the home of the world's largest expatriate Iraqi community - the Iraqi Embassy in Amman estimates that about 500,000 Iraqis live in Jordan, and some unofficial estimates are considerably higher. While the bulk of Iraqis who came to Jordan before 2004 were predominantly Shia, since 2004 there has been a large influx of Sunni Arabs, many middle class and above (Ref A). Many of these new arrivals view themselves as being here temporarily, and hope to return to Iraq after conditions stabilize. Although many are not official "residents" of Jordan, the GOJ has agreed that all Iraqis of voting age present in Jordan may participate in the Iraq Out-of-Country Voting (OCV) process without fear of investigation or penalties.

[1](#)3. (SBU) Prior to the January 2005 Iraqi election, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) - which was then responsible for administering the OCV process - estimated the total number of potential Iraqi voters in Jordan at up to 200,000. In the election, however, only 23,000 Iraqis actually voted. Hamdia al-Husseini, head of the Amman-based Independent Election Commission for Iraq (IECI) office that is directly administering the December, 2005 elections, told Emboff she believes that as many as 300,000 eligible Iraqi voters may now be in Jordan. End Background.

High Turnout Projected

[1](#)4. (SBU) Whatever the actual figure of potential voters, Post contacts agree that Iraqi participation in Jordan next week will be much higher than last January. Jordanian daily newspaper Al-Arab Al-Youm projected that as many as 70 percent of eligible Iraqis in Jordan will vote. While Post contacts are less sanguine, all predicted that the December OCV turnout here would exceed 50,000.

[1](#)5. (SBU) Contacts maintain that the projected upswing in turnout will result from increased interest in voting among Sunnis, IECI advertisements that explain the electoral process and the documentation required to vote, much-improved information about parties and candidates, a greater sense of this election's importance, and significant post-January election regret among those who did not participate in that election. Majid al-Sadi, a prominent businessman who did not vote in the January election, told Emboff that he considered voting this time around a "national duty." Hassan Aldahan, another January election non-participant, explained that "last time I knew nothing about the candidates - this time there is much more information." Aldahan noted that he and his friends actively watch Iraqi election candidate programming on satellite TV stations al-Iraqiyya and al-Sharqiyya.

Iraqi Political Parties Seek Votes

16. (C) Al-Sadi, Aldahan, and other contacts also note more effective political party organizations and media campaigns targeting Iraqi voters in Jordan this time around. Until recently, many Amman neighborhoods and highway overpasses were replete with a variety of political posters advertising the parties of Iyad Allawi, Saleh Mutlak, Hassib al-Obeidi, Hazim Sha,lan, and others. Some of these were allegedly removed by rival parties or Jordanian authorities within a few hours of being posted; Ja,afar al-Taie, an Allawi campaign manager, told Emboff that someone wrote "don,t support Ba,athists" over some of the Allawi posters. Al-Taie opined that this incident contributed to a subsequent decision by the Municipality of Amman to limit Iraqi election posters to the immediate vicinity of Amman,s ten OCV polling sites. Note: Al-Taie and al-Sadi also asserted that a planned Allawi support rally following the recent Najaf incident was cancelled by Jordanian authorities. End Note.

17. (SBU) Several Iraqi political parties are also advertising heavily in Jordanian newspapers. In recent days several full and half-page color ads have appeared in Jordanian newspapers on behalf of the coalitions of Iyad Allawi, Adnan Dulaime, and Saleh Mutlak, as well as Hazim Sha,lan,s party, with smaller ads appearing for the Movement of Arab Iraqis and the Iraqi Coalition, led by ex-Interior Minister Nuri Badran. The Dulaime coalition also sent an SMS to Jordanian mobile phones (including Emboff,s) telling Iraqis in Jordan that a vote for them is a "vote for honesty and against sectionalism and sectarianism." Former Saddam Hussein associate, Anbar native, and January election boycotter Abdul Latif Humayum gave an interview to a Jordanian newspaper calling on all Iraqis in Jordan to vote.

Free Dinners and Food Parcels

18. (C) Al-Taie, Aldahan, and independent Sunni political dabbler Mohammed al-Hamdi from Ramadhi (Ref B) told Emboff that Saleh Mutlak,s coalition rented out some local restaurants and night clubs to host free parties and dinners in support of their cause. Al-Hamdi said that Mutlak,s Jordan OCV campaign is being managed by two of his eight brothers, Musleh and Taha, who have opened a campaign office in downtown Amman. Iyad Allawi,s coalition has also opened a campaign office in Amman. Both al-Hamdi and Embassy Sunni contact Husam Ghazalee (close to Hassib al-Obeidi - protect) alleged that several parties, including Mutlak,s, are offering cash payments and other inducements to those who can turn out Jordan-based voters in their favor. Al-Taie admitted that the Allawi group is sending food packages to poor Iraqis in Jordan, and sponsoring football matches featuring well-known Iraqi players, with the same goal in mind.

Where is the UIC?

19. (C) Sh,ia religious parties, including the Unified Iraqi Coalition (UIC), have not advertised to date in Jordanian papers or undertaken any other campaign activities here that we have been able to identify. Al-Hamdi claimed that the Sh,ia religious parties rely on neighborhood networks to turn out their vote; Aldahan asserted that an explicit message from religious leaders in Najaf is all that is necessary to activate these voters. The UIC won the plurality of Jordanian OCV votes last January, followed by Allawi,s group. Most Embassy contacts predict that next week, Allawi,s coalition will end up first in Jordan, with the UIC second; all felt that Allawi,s Jordan organization was strong. However, at least one Jordanian paper recently predicted that Allawi will finish behind both Dulaime,s and Mutlak,s coalitions.

Comment

10. (C) Iraq OCV campaigning in Jordan,s relatively open atmosphere is a possible microcosm of what Iraqi urban politicking could be like once Iraq,s situation stabilizes. The relatively intense campaigning going on in Jordan compared to last January is somewhat surprising given the marginal impact of OCV (compared to in-Iraq voting) on Iraq,s election outcome. It may reflect the greater importance given to this election by the parties, as well as a Sunni Arab desire to "stand up and be counted" as much as possible this time around.

HALE